Nominated for TWO Harvey Awards!

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NEGATIVE BURN

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STEPHEN CHENG

BRIAN CLOPPER

TYIM COURTS

GREG DIGENTI

PAUL FRICKE

MICHAEL GAYDOS

NOEL K. HANNAN

JON HAWARD

BRIAN HORTON

CHRIS HUNTER

LEE KITZIS

CHARLES MOORE

LISA MOORE

NICK F. NEUBAUER

JEFF NICHOLSON

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MATTHEW SMITH

LEN STRAZEWSKI

ALWYN TALBOT

CHARLES VESS

PATRICK WOODROW

64 PAGES

Joe Pruett / Editor

VOLUME ONE • NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR

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illustrated by Chris Hunter

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written by Len Strazewski
illustrated by Paul Fricke

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written and illustrated by Brian Bolland

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illustrated by Brian Horton

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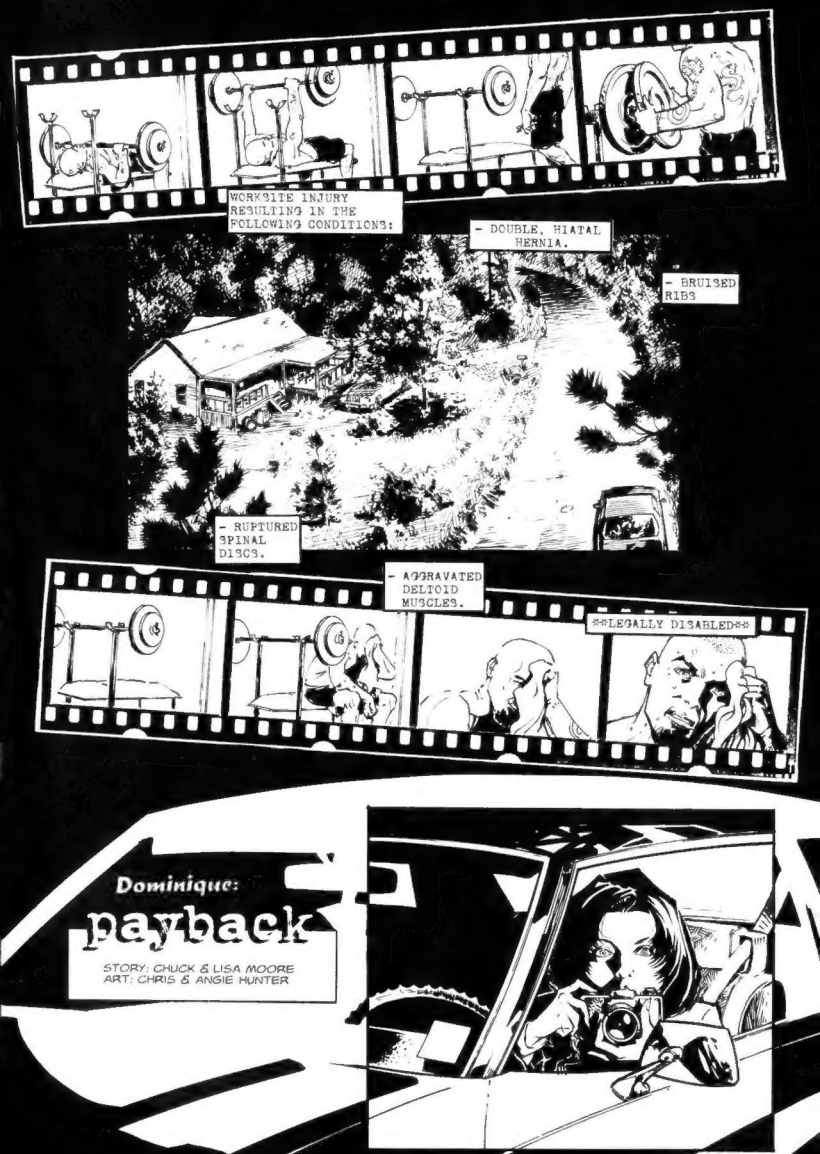

WORKSITE INJURY RESULTING IN THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:
- DOUBLE, HIATAL HERNIA.
- BRUISED RIBS
- RUPTURED SPINAL DISCS.
- AGGRAVATED DELTOID MUSCLES.
LEGALLY DISABLED
Dominique:
payback
STORY: CHUCK & LISA MOORE
ART: CHRIS & ANGIE HUNTER

RUR-RUR-RUR-RUR-RUR-RUR-RUR-RUR-RUR
WHERE YOU GOING, HUH? DON'T YOU WANT SOME MORE PICTURES?
WHO ARE YOU? THE INSURANCE COMPANY SEND YOU?
BLAM!
PLEASE GOD, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE...
I SAID...
SNAP!
WHO SENT YOU!!!
SKPSSH!
GREAT. SOMEONE'S COMING.
NOW WHO'S HERE?

GEEZ, HE LOOKS FAMILIAR.
SEND HER HOME, LEVI. WE GOT BUSINESS.
HMPH. SHE MUST BE ONE OF YOURS.
YEAH. RIGHT. NOW GET HER OUT OF HERE AND YOUR ASS INSIDE.
I GOT A MESSAGE FROM BUBBA.
'BOUT WHAT.. EXACTLY?
PAYBACK.

BULLSHIT!
CRASH!
WHA--
HEY!
OW-! EASE UP, MAN! WHAT'S UP WITH THIS?
DON'T BUBBA PAY YOU ENOUGH, LEVI...? THAT YOU GOTTA TAKE MORE OFF THE TOP?
EVEN IF I WAS SCAMMING -- WHICH I AIN'T--YOU DON'T GOT THE BRASS TO DO ME!
NO.
DON'T DO THIS, BRADDOCK.

SO WHAT ARE YOU? A COP?
AND YOU ARE ...?
NOT WITH HIM.
IRONSIDE HERE IS LEGALLY DISABLED, PULLING WORKMAN'S COMP. GUESS HE LOST HIS WHEELCHAIR.
DAMN, LEVI. YOU'RE SCREWING OVER EVERYBODY.
SO I GOT GOOD REHAB.
I KNOW YOU ... FROM A LONG TIME AGO.
THEN YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW ME.
YEAH, OLD BRADDOCK USED TO BE A GOOD COP. ... SOBER.
YEAH, HE WAS A GOOD COP.
AND I WAS A LITTLE BAD ASS.
82
JUN
A LOT OF KIDS GET CARS WHEN THEY TURN SIXTEEN.
I WAS FIFTEEN.

A LITTLE PRESENT TO MYSELF--EVERY FEW WEEKS.
NEVER TO SELL --AS IF IT MATTERED. I ONLY DID IT FOR THE RIDE. THE RUSH
AT THE VERY LEAST, I SHOULD'VE BEEN THROWN INTO JUVENILE AT WORST, KILLED.
LISTEN...NICOLE, IS IT? I'M GONNA LET YOU GO, THIS TIME.
BUT WHATEVER GOT YOU HERE -- YOU CAN CHOOSE TO STOP IT. NOW --
--BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE. YEAH, I REMEMBER.
NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO STOP.
LIKE HE'S GOT A CHOICE!
EVEN MONEY SAYS BRADDOCK'S HERE PAYIN' OFF A DEBT FOR LOSIN' ONE TOO MANY GAMES.
IF BRADDOCK DON'T POP ME, BUBBA'S GONNA DO HIM...IF I DON'T GET HIM FIRST.
THEY CAN'T MAKE YOU DO ANYTHING, BRADDOCK.
BUT YOU CAN, CAN'T YOU?
LEAST, THAT'S WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE. THAT YOU'D SHOOT ME--KILL ME--JUST TO SAVE THIS MOPE?
THAT'S SOME PAYBACK.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO KILL HIM.
DAMN STRAIGHT.
skpak
BACK AT THE ACADEMY, THEY DRILLED INTO OUR HEADS ABOUT WHAT MADE A "GOOD SHOT."
AMAZING HOW LIFE OR DEATH CAME DOWN TO THREE LITTLE WORDS.
ABILITY.
OPPORTUNITY.
JEOPARDY.
KOOM!
NOT AGAIN!

"AGAIN...?"
UH...NEVER MIND. I DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
THIS IS A MESS, BRADDOCK. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
LIFE.
FUCK
AT LEAST YOU AND ME ARE EVEN NOW.
UH UH. NOT EVEN CLOSE.
YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK WITH BUBBA NOW, SO TAKE YOUR OWN ADVICE--
--BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
LIKE ANYTHING I DID EVER MADE A DIFFERENCE.
YEAH. IT DID.
FIN

FROM THE LEGENDARY ASHCAN SERIES!

CAST ADRIFT IN THE RIVER OF TIME, FIVE MARTIAL ARTISTS FROM MEDIEVAL CHINA ARE REINCARNATED AS QUINTUPLETS IN SUBURBAN CHICAGO. A PLEASANT ENOUGH LIFE, UNTIL THEY DISCOVER THEIR MORTAL ENEMIES GOT THERE SOONER -- AND LIE IN WAIT FOR THE --

TOYS! GAMES! FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!

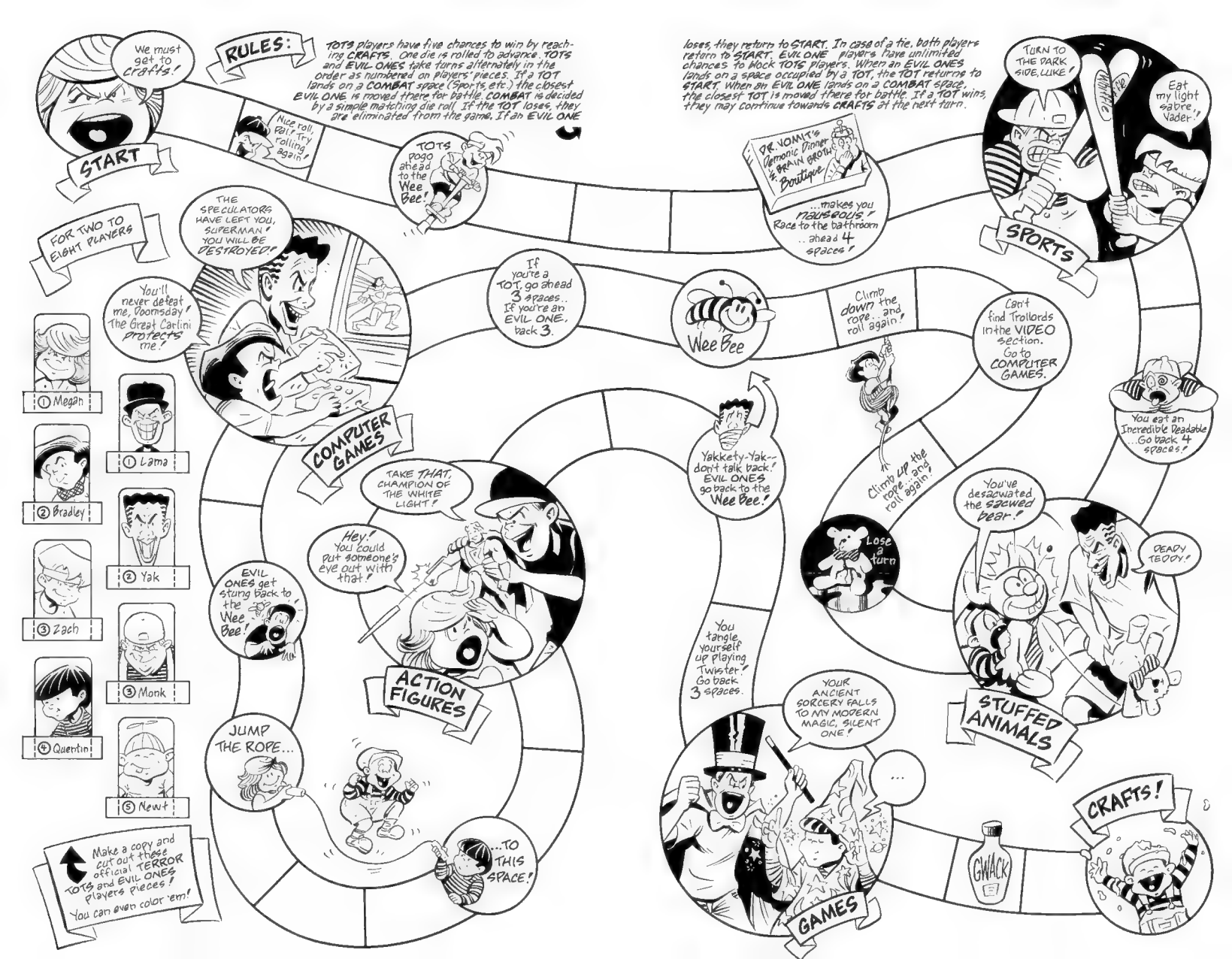
TERROR tots!

TREACHERY "Я" US: A GAME OF DEATH!

FEATURING THEIR ETERNAL NEMESES: The Black Lama, The Monk, The Yak

Ah, THE FIRST YOUNG SHOPPERS TO ENTER OUR NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART TOYSTORE!
BITE ME, WAGE SLAVE!
TOYS! TOYS! UH-huh! TOYS!
YOU COMING, GEEKS? OR DO YOU NEED YOUR MAMA TO PROTECT YOU?
FLIP!
A challenge!
Yes, but is it collectable?
Here we go again!
Wah!
Come, Newton! We are called once more to confront our destiny!
No! Wanna stay with Momma!
GO AHEAD, SWEETIES! YOU HAVE FUN!
I need a cigarette!
Black Lama and your corrupt companions... the Yak and the Monk!
You dare defile this place of joy and happiness?
SURE, WHY NOT? WE JUST LIKE TO SEE YOU ALL FIRED UP... LIKE THE TIME WE FRIED YOU IN CHINA!
HIT IT, BOYS!
BONG
BONG

KRASH!
WHAT'S THAT? WHAT'S GOING ON?
JUST OUR SECURITY SYSTEM. IF ANY TROUBLE-MAKERS FOOL WITH THE FIRE ALARM, IT TRAPS--
GET MY KIDS OUTTA THERE!
YIP! YES, MA'AM AT ONCE MA'AM!
I'LL HAVE THE CLEARANCE CODES FAXED FROM ARKANSAS IMMEDIATELY!
NOW WE WON'T BE DISTURBED WHILE WE PLAY OUR LITTLE GAME.
You won't get away with this! Our mother will summon the authorities!
Yeah... and then you're gonna get it!
BWAHAHA!
HERE'S THE RULES:
YOU HOLD US OFF UNTIL THE GATES OPEN, WE'LL TAKE THE BLAME FOR THE FALSE ALARM! ALL THE TOYS AND STUFF ARE FAIR GAME.
WE DEFEAT YOU--
--SSSNIKT!
What are we going to do? They're bigger than we are!
But there's five of us!
And we know many TWICKS!
Crafts... if only we can get them to the Crafts section!

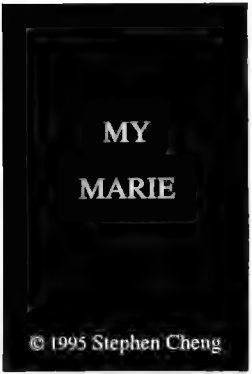

RULES:
TOTS players have five chances to win by reaching CRAFTS. One die is rolled to advance. TOTS and EVIL ONES take turns alternately in the order as numbered on players' pieces. If a TOT lands on a COMBAT space (Sports, etc.) the closest EVIL ONE is moved there for battle. COMBAT is decided by a simple matching die roll. If the TOT loses, they are eliminated from the game. If an EVIL ONE loses, they return to START. In case of a tie, both players return to START. EVIL ONE players have unlimited chances to block TOTS players. When an EVIL ONES lands on a space occupied by a TOT, the TOT returns to START. When an EVIL ONE lands on a COMBAT space, the closest TOT is moved there for battle. If a TOT wins, they may continue towards CRAFTS at the next turn.
START
We must get to Crafts!
Nice roll, pal. Try rolling again!
TOTS pogo ahead to the Wee Bee!
Dr. Vomit's Demonic Dinner & Brain Broth Boutique
...makes you nauseous! Race to the bathroom ..ahead 4 spaces!
SPORTS
Turn to the dark side, Luke!
Eat my light sabre, Vader!
FOR TWO TO EIGHT PLAYERS
THE SPECULATORS HAVE LEFT YOU, SUPERMAN! YOU WILL BE DESTROYED!
You'll never defeat me, Doomsday! The Great Carlini protects me!
If you're a TOT, go ahead 3 spaces.. If you're an EVIL ONE, back 3.
Wee Bee
Climb down the rope.. and roll again.
Can't find Trollords in the VIDEO section. Go to COMPUTER GAMES.
COMPUTER GAMES
You eat an Incredible Readable ...Go back 4 spaces!
Yakkety-Yak-- don't talk back! EVIL ONES go back to the Wee Bee!
Climb up the rope ...and roll again!
Lose a turn
TAKE THAT, CHAMPION OF THE WHITE LIGHT!
Hey! You could put someone's eye out with that!
EVIL ONES get stung back to the Wee Bee!
ACTION FIGURES
You've desacwated the stawed bear!
DEADY TEDDY!
STUFFED ANIMALS
You tangle yourself up playing Twister! Go back 3 spaces.
YOUR ANCIENT SORCERY FALLS TO MY MODERN MAGIC, SILENT ONE!
...
GAMES
GWACK
CRAFTS!
JUMP THE ROPE...
...TO THIS SPACE!
① Meggh
① Lama
② Bradley
② Yak
③ Zach
③ Monk
④ Quentin
⑤ Newt
Make a copy and cut out these official TERROR TOTS and EVIL ONES players pieces! You can even color 'em!

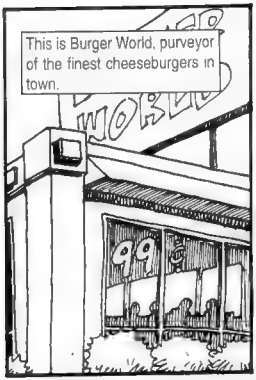
DARN IT! THEY MADE IT!
THEY ARE HERE! I CAN FEEL IT!
Uh-huhh! Uh-huh!
28 Arts Crafts
JUST LET ME GET MY--
SPLOK!
PLAY-POOP! NONTOXIC BUT NOXIOUS CONCOCTION!
Welcome to crafts, evil ones!
Prepare to eat GWACK!
28 Arts Crafts
PLOOP!
BLOP
SPLOP

THERE YOU GO, LITTLE LADY. NOW HOW 'BOUT EASIN' UP ON THE OL' ARM!
IT'S ABOUT TIME, BUBBA! BUT IF MY KIDS AREN'T OKAY, I'M GONNA FEED YOU YOUR ARM THROUGH YOUR REAR ENTRANCE!
THERE THEY ARE... MY LITTLE DARLINGS!
STICKY STUFF! WHY IS IT ALWAYS STICKY STUFF?!
WHOO!! WHOO!
Strazewski/Fricke©'96

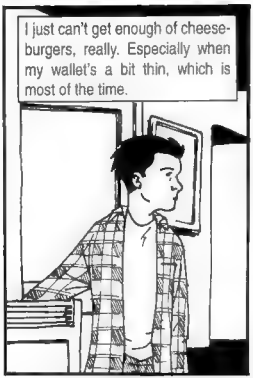
YOU CAN DOWNLOAD MORE *TERROR TOTS* ADVENTURES FROM OUR *WORLDWIDE WEB SITE!* http:// www. animus. com/ Tot
PRINT THEM OUT ON YOUR OWN PRINTER AND PASS THEM OUT TO YOUR FRIENDS!
AND LOOK FOR THE *TERROR TOTS DIGEST* AT YOUR LOCAL COMIC SHOP THIS SUMMER!

JESUS H. BLEEDIN' CHRIST. LOOK AT THE GAZONKAS ON THAT ONE!
I COULD DO HER A FAVOUR, I'LL TELL YOU!
YOU SEE SOME THINGS... SITTING HERE, YOU SEE SOME THINGS!
THE OTHER DAY A BLEEDIN' PANDA STROLLED BY... SOMEBODY DRESSED AS A PANDA... LARGE AS LIFE! I KID YOU NOT.
JUST STROLLED BY... WHAT IS THE WORLD COMING TO!? YOU NEVER KNOW DO YOU... EH? YOU NEVER KNOW! BRING BACK NATIONAL SERVICE I SAY! THAT'D GIVE 'EM SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!
AND THESE SHORT SKIRTS! SAINTS PRESERVE US! THEY OUGHTN'T TO BE ALLOWED!
I HAVEN'T HAD MY HAND UP ONE O' THEM IN A FAIR WHILE, I'LL TELL YOU!
MORE'S THE PITY.
'AY UP! EYES LEFT! FUCK-A-DUCK! LOOK AT THE STATE O' THIS ONE! I COULD GIVE THIS ONE A SORTIN' OUT THAT SHE WOULDN'T FORGET IN A HURRY!
OH, HELLO MR M!
HELLO EVEY!
EVEY, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MR CARSTAIRS. CARSTAIRS, THIS IS EVELIN
HOW DO YOU DO?
HMMMPH!

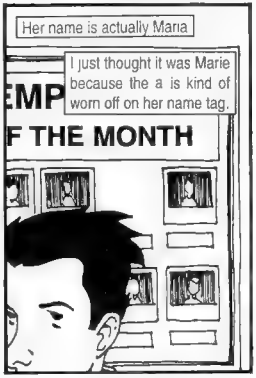

MY
MARIE
© 1995 Stephen Cheng


This is Burger World, purveyor of the finest cheeseburgers in town.

I eat lunch here everyday

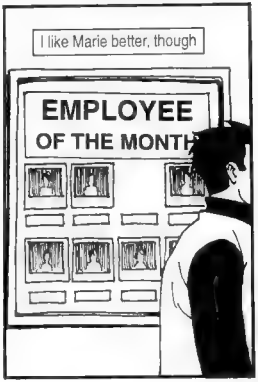

I just can't get enough of cheeseburgers, really. Especially when my wallet's a bit thin, which is most of the time.

There's also the fact that I get to see Marie.
Isn't she beautiful?


Her name is actually Maria
I just thought it was Marie because the a is kind of worn off on her name tag.
F THE MONTH

It wasn't until she was named Employee of the Month did I know that her name is Maria.
EMPLOYEE
OF THE MONTH

EMPLOYEE

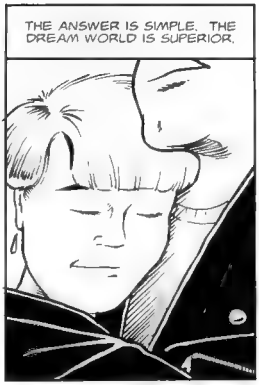

I like Marie better, though
EMPLOYEE
OF THE MONTH

I knew I'd fallen in love with her when I found myself drawing in class one day.
I was wondering at the time what our kids would look like.
I want to ask if she wonders about it, too.
May I help you?
Um..
Yes?
Two cheeseburgers.
Anything else?
And this.

Anything else?
Okay fine. She doesn't exactly know I exist. But I'm working on it
I'm just waiting for the right moment to approach her, that's all
I'm just thinking of the right thing to say.

I wouldn't want her to think I'm some sort of weirdo, after all.
What's wrong with her, anyway? She must have noticed me coming in here day after day
What do I have to do to get her attention?
Look at her. I bet she thinks I'm not good enough for her.
Nice plaid.
Thanks.
God, I hate her. I hate myself
This is pointless. Nothing is ever going to happen between us.
I shouldn't even be here. Even I have to admit this isn't healtny
Cheeseburgers make me ill. I'm going to get up and leave this place for good
I'm going to walk pass her and not look at her and pretend she never existed.
I don't even know her name.
What's the point of having children, anyway?
Come again!
I can't get enough of cheeseburgers. Really.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? HOW DID SHE LET SOMEONE CONVINCE HER TO SPEND MORE TIME IN A WORLD OF DREAMS THAN A WORLD OF TRUTH?

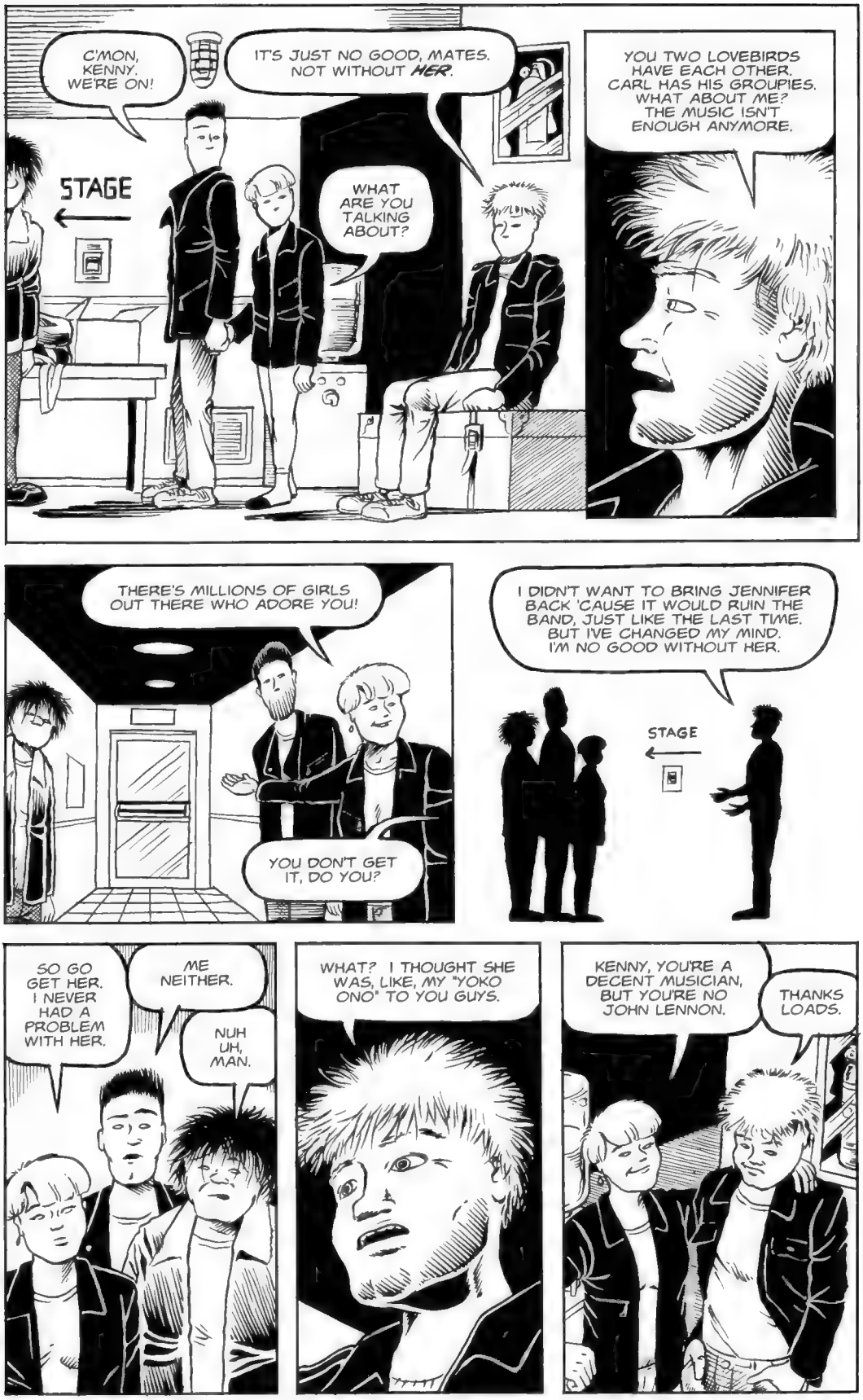


NO REGRETS {5} stage dive

SHE WAKES, AND SHE'S THIRTY-TWO YEARS OLD, LIVING AT HER PARENTS' WHILE OUT OF WORK.
SHE NODS OFF, AND SHE'S TWENTY-TWO, WRITING MUSIC FOR DEVOTED DREAM-FANS
SHE WAKES, AND SHE HAS COMPLETELY TAXED HER MOTHER'S PATIENCE WITH THE INCESSANT SLEEP.
SHE DRIFTS BACK, AND SHE HAS GOOD FRIENDS, CAMARADERIE, AND A PURPOSE.
STAGE ENTRANCE
SHE WAKES, AND SHE HAS FORFEITED JOB-HUNTING ANOTHER DAY, AND ANOTHER, AND ANOTHER . . .
SHE SLEEPS, AND MIKE ISN'T MARRIED TO SOME UNKNOWN WOMAN, HE'S HERE, MAKING LOVE TO HER.

WHEN MIKE MAKES LOVE TO KIM IN HIS DREAMS (AS OPPOSED TO HIS OWN WIFE IN REALITY), IT SEEMS TOO REAL TO BE DISMISSED.
HE WONDERS IF PERHAPS IT'S HAPPENING IN ANOTHER DIMENSION OR REALITY, AND IF HE COULD EMIGRATE THERE SOMEHOW.
UNTIL THEN, HE FABRICATES STORIES OF FILLING SECOND SHIFTS AT WORK. WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET BACK TO DREAM LAND.
AT THE OFFICE, THE STORAGE ROOM, AND THE SLEEPING FILLS AWAIT.
ONCE THROUGH THAT THRESHOLD, HE REUNITES WITH HIS LOVER, AND HIS OTHER BAND MATES, IN THE MOST POPULAR GROUP OF ALL TIME
NO REGRETS.

ALL COURTESY OF KENNY SILVERS, MASTER DREAMER.
LEONARD STEVENS? DOES HE HAVE AN APPOINTMENT? JUST SEND HIM IN.
OH, IT'S YOU. THE OLD MASTER DREAMER. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU'VE DONE WELL, KENNY. A FINE JOB.
YES, I BUILT THIS CITY OUT OF YOUR RUBBLE SO DON'T GO ASKING FOR IT BACK!
ABSOLUTELY NOT. I GAVE IT TO YOU . . . AND IT'S YOURS. I'VE JUST COME LOOKING FOR A POSITION, THAT'S ALL.
REALLY? WELL, THAT'S NO PROBLEM. GLAD TO HELP OUT, OLD MAN.
IN FACT YOU CAN START RIGHT NOW, AS MY ADVISOR. THERE'S SOMEONE I WANT TO BRING HERE. A WOMAN NAMED JENNIFER.
SHE NEVER SHOWS UP LIKE THE OTHER DREAMERS. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
IT MEANS SHE IS NOT A REGRETFUL DREAMER. SHE DREAMS FREELY, OUT BEYOND AUBURN IN THE GENERAL DREAM PLANES.
BUT I TOLD YOU FROM THE START, THOSE AREAS ARE OFF LIMITS. FORGET ABOUT HER!
I DON'T FOLLOW RULES, GEEZER. I'M GETTING HER BACK, SOMEHOW.


C'MON, KENNY. WE'RE ON!
IT'S JUST NO GOOD, MATES. NOT WITHOUT HER.
STAGE
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOU TWO LOVEBIRDS HAVE EACH OTHER. CARL HAS HIS GROUPIES. WHAT ABOUT ME? THE MUSIC ISN'T ENOUGH ANYMORE.
THERE'S MILLIONS OF GIRLS OUT THERE WHO ADORE YOU!
YOU DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?
I DIDN'T WANT TO BRING JENNIFER BACK 'CAUSE IT WOULD RUIN THE BAND, JUST LIKE THE LAST TIME. BUT I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. I'M NO GOOD WITHOUT HER.
STAGE
SO GO GET HER. I NEVER HAD A PROBLEM WITH HER.
ME NEITHER.
NUH UH, MAN.
WHAT? I THOUGHT SHE WAS, LIKE, MY "YOKO ONO" TO YOU GUYS.
KENNY, YOU'RE A DECENT MUSICIAN, BUT YOU'RE NO JOHN LENNON.
THANKS LOADS.

BUT WHAT'S THE POINT? I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN FIND HER ANYWAY.
WAITAMINUTE. YOU BROUGHT US HERE. AND MILLIONS OF OTHERS. WHY CAN'T YOU DRAW JENNIFER HERE?
I DIDN'T SAY I COULDN'T! I JUST . . . I JUST HAVEN'T APPLIED MYSELF YET, THAT'S ALL.
THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS GIG. GO FIND HER!
THANKS.
IT'S GOING TO BE THE BEST NOW.
WHAT ABOUT THE GIG?
YOU KNOW THE WORDS, MIKE. FILL IN ON VOCALS. WE'LL BE FINE.
STAGE
FIRE
YEAH. THE SHOW MUST GO ON.
NO!
STAGE
KSSH
BRNGGNGBRRNGGNGR
THE SHOW ISN'T GOING ON.
WE'RE GETTING OUT!

TO BE CONTINUED

I, ASSASSIN

WRITER: NICK F. NEUBAUER ARTIST: JON HAWARD
LETTERER: STUART MCCALLUM
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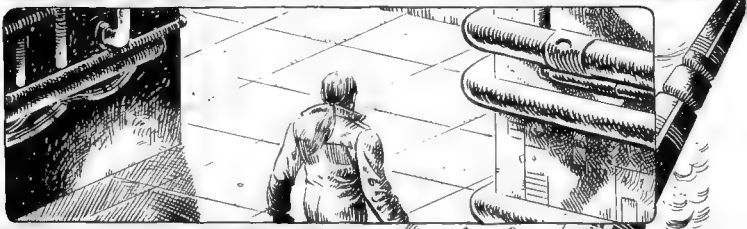


HELL USE GASER SAFETY SLUGS IN THE MODFIED MAGNUM SO HE WON'T OVER PENETRATE AND BREAK THE WINDOW
PHUT!
PHUT!
PHUT!
TWO IN THE BODY. ONE IN THE HEAD - GUARANTEES THEY'RE DEAD **REAL TASTY**

GOOD WORK MR CHENKO
COME INSIDE I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET SOMEONE
A...LOW ME TO SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE MATTER
.....

A SIMULACRUM?
TOOK SOME TROUBLE AND EXPENSE BUT, I FEEL THE PERSONALITY MATRIX HAS SETTLED IN QUITE WELL.
EXCELLENT
IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME PROVE IT TO YOURSELF
SIMULACRUM? OH YES, YOU!
I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN "THE BEST AGENT IS ONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW HE IS AN AGENT" - SAME FOR ANDROIDS I GUESS

SORT OF. IT IMPROVES ROLE PLAY RESPONSE TIME, THOUGH DIETER'S OWN PERSONALITY IS QUITE EMOTIONLESS - WHICH HELPED WHEN IT WAS COPIED
TIC...
CONTROLLER. I'M NOT NEEDED HERE ANY MORE. I THINK WE DISCUSSED A WEEK OFF
YES. A WEEK. I JUST NEED TO CLEAN UP HERE. YOUR NEW PARTNER CAN HELP ME.
MORE LIKE BROTHERS
HA HA HA...
JON HAWARD 95

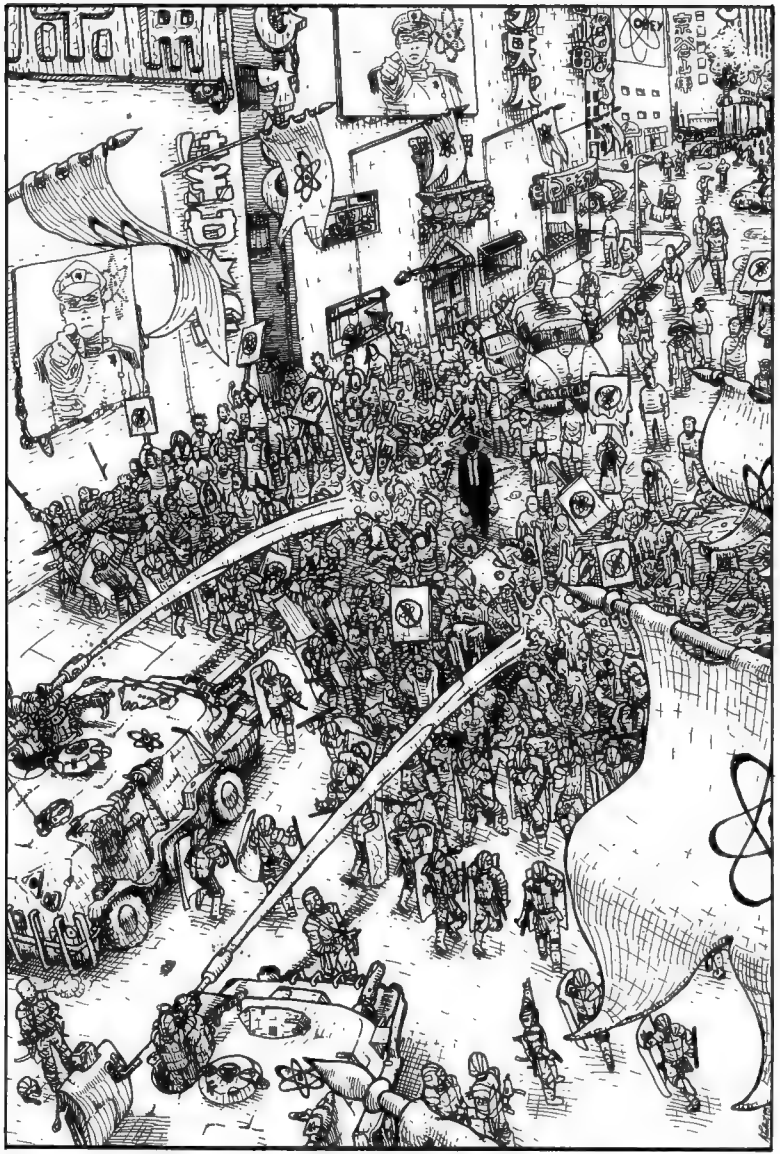
THE ORIGINS of the WORM CULT
ALTHOUGH ALL ARE VERY FAMILIAR WITH THE WORM CULT AND THE HUNDREDS OF DEATHS RESULTING FROM IT, FEW KNOW OF ITS ROOTS.
LET US NOW JOURNEY BACK TO 1983, TO THE SMALL TOWN OF JUDZIN, MISSISSIPPI, WHERE WE FIND TWO YOUNG MEN, J.B. CHIGGIN AND BUBBA SMUGGS, UNCOVERING THE DARK, UNFORGIVING SECRET OF "THE WORM".
HANG ON A SEKINT, BUBBA, WHILST I TRY AND FIND THAT "ALABAMMER" RECKERD ALBUM YOU WANTED TA BORRY...
THIS SIDE UP
GREG DIGNAM
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS SHIT, J.B.? YOU MAKIN' MOONSHINE?
NAW, IT'S JUST BEER.
NO SHIT?! THAT WHOLE THANG IS BEER? CAN I GIT SOME?
UH... WELL, IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT SUGAR AND WATER AT THE PRESENT.
WHAT? YOU MEAN YOU AIN'T ADDED THE ALKEEHOL TO IT YET?
YOU DON'T ADD ALKEEHOL TO BEER, BUBBA. IT FERMENTATES ITS OWN.
BE
WHUTZIT SO DARK FER?
DARK? OH, CUZ I ACCIDENTLY DROPPED A WHOLE BAG OF MALT IN IT. UH.... HERE'S THAT RECKERD.

OKEE DOKE. HEY, WAIT A MINUTE... WHAT'S THAT THING ON THE BOTTOM?!
WHAT THING?
RIGHT THERE ON THE BOTTOM, SEE IT? LOOKS LIKE A WORM? AW, SWEET JEEZUS, J.B., IT DONE MOVED!
DAMN! I SEE IT NOW! HOW THE HELL DID THAT-UH-THAT THING GET IN THERE? I AIN'T NEVER GONNA' GIT THAT THANG OUT!
YOU WANT I SHOULD TRY, J.B.?
UH... NAW, THAT LITTLE OL' THING AIN'T GONNA HURT NOBODY. THEY PUT 'EM IN TEQUILA ALL THE TIME.
YEAH, I SUPPOSE YER RIGHT. OH, WELL, I RECKIN I'LL HEAD HOME AND GIT DRUNK NOW. LATER, J.B.
DUM
?
ER, YEAH... OKAY, BUBBA.
FLURP
AW, HELL, BUBBA! DID YOU SEE THAT?!
HUH? SEE WHAT, MAN?

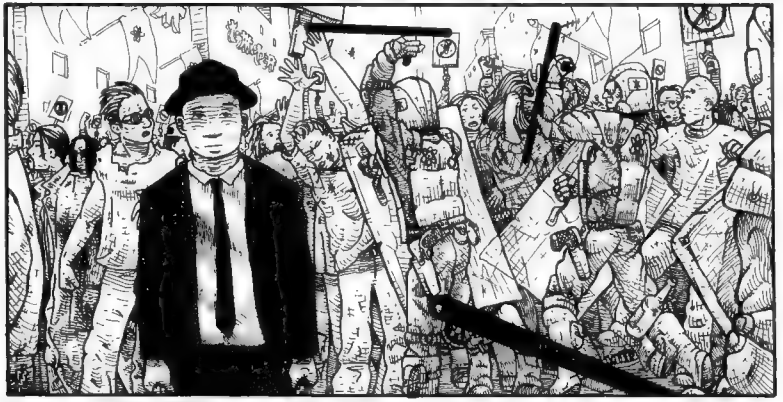
WELL, I'LL BE A PIMPLE ON THE BUTT OF SOCIETY! LOOKS TO ME LIKE HE'S ASKIN' US TA' KILL FOR HIM OR SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT!
RIGHT YOU ARE, BUBBA! DURN THANG MUST BE A GOD OR SOMETHIN' OF THAT NATURE!

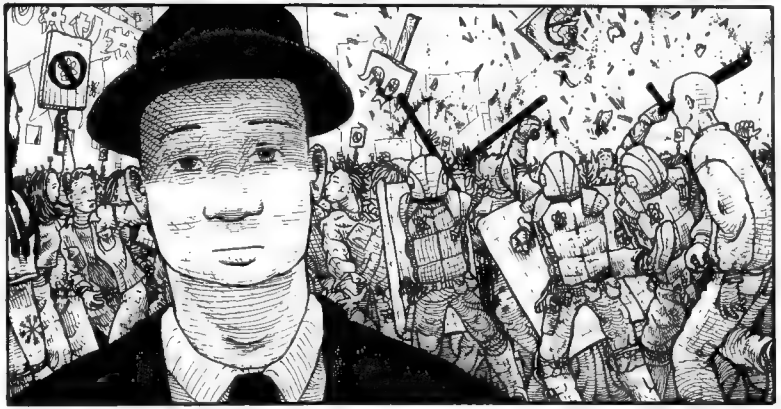
WELL, OF COURSE THE WORM WAS NOTHING BUT A THICK FUNGUS OF SOME KIND, AND, NEEDLESS TO SAY, ALL THE DEATHS WHICH RESULTED FROM THE CRUSADES OF J.B. CHIGGEN AND BUBBA SMUGGS COULD HAVE BEEN EASILY AVOIDED HAD THEY NOT BEEN SUCH INBRED IMBECILES, BUT WE ARE HERE TO EDUCATE, NOT TO JUDGE.

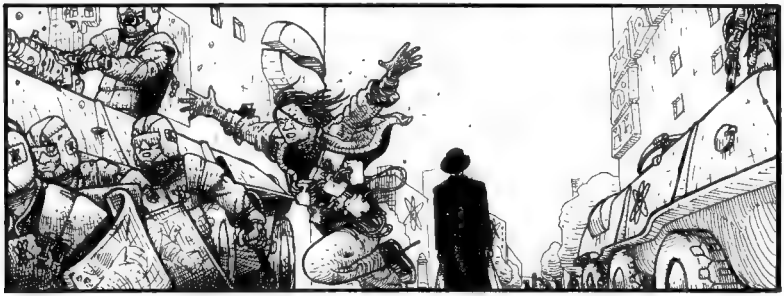
THE END

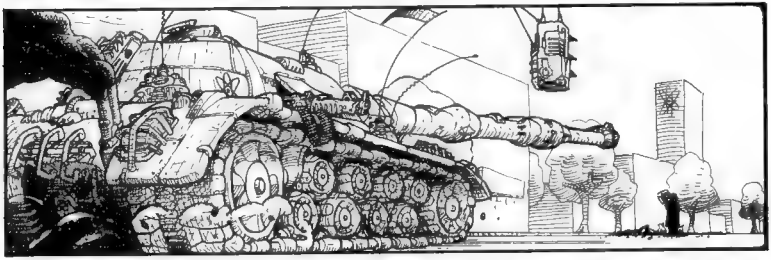


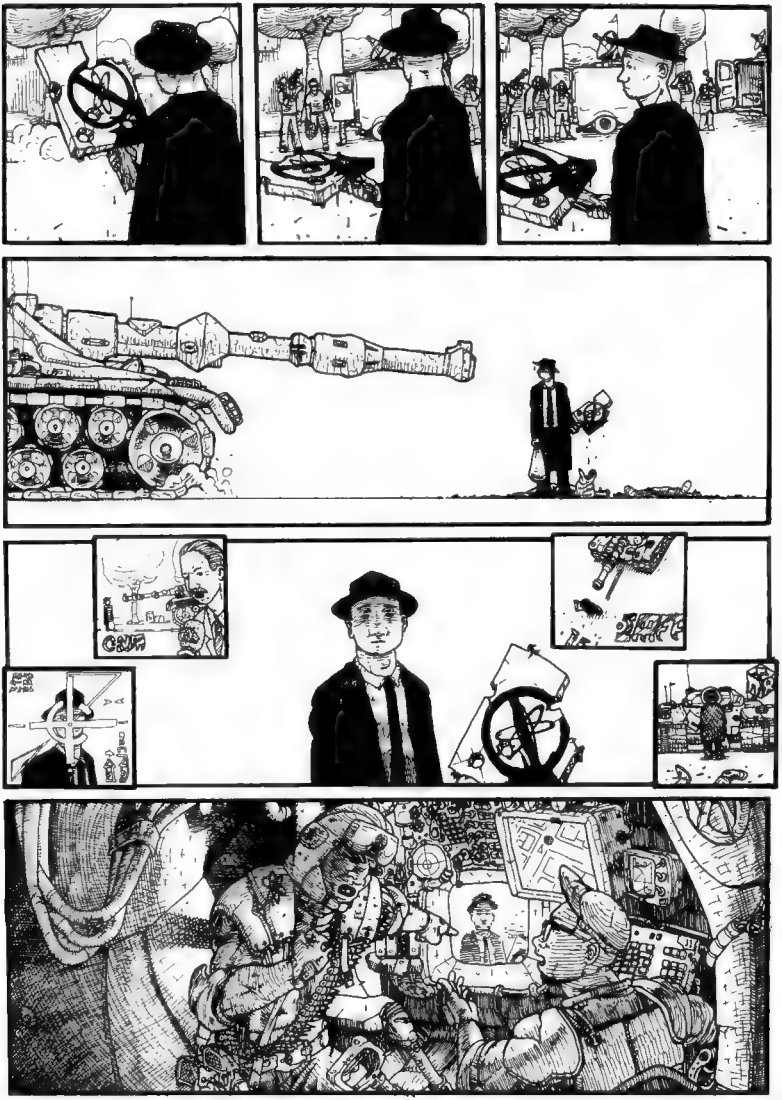
Happenstance
STORY
Noel K Hannan
ART
Alwyn Talbot

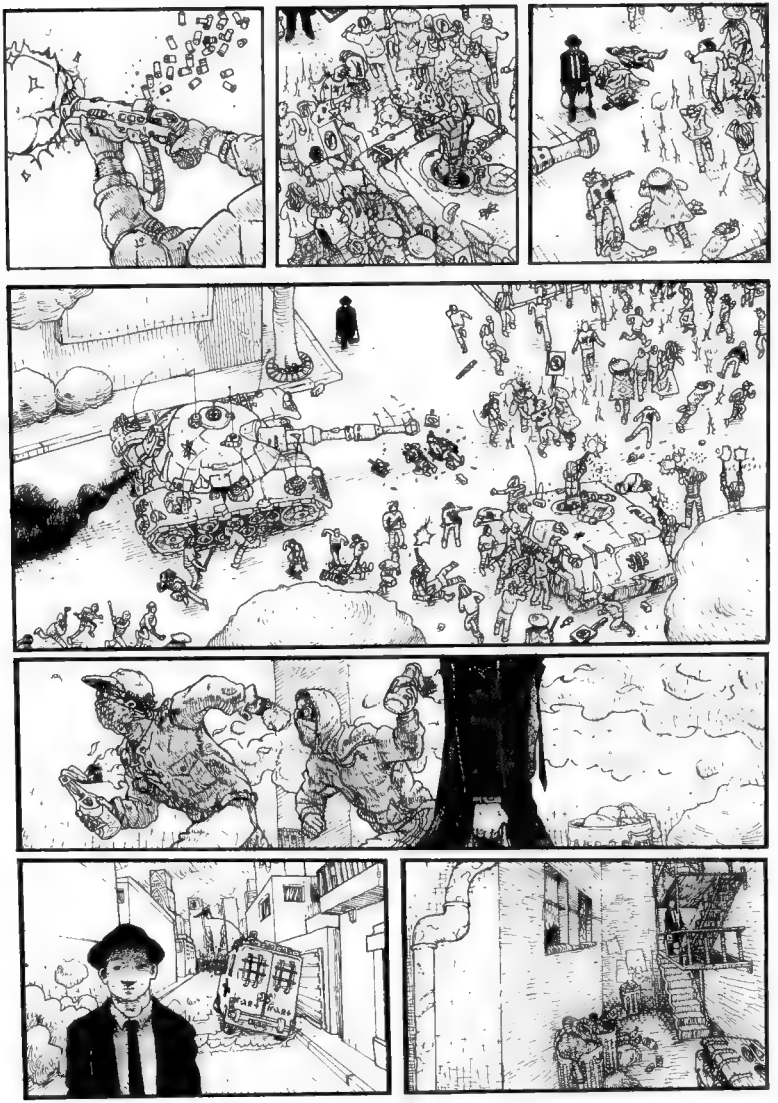


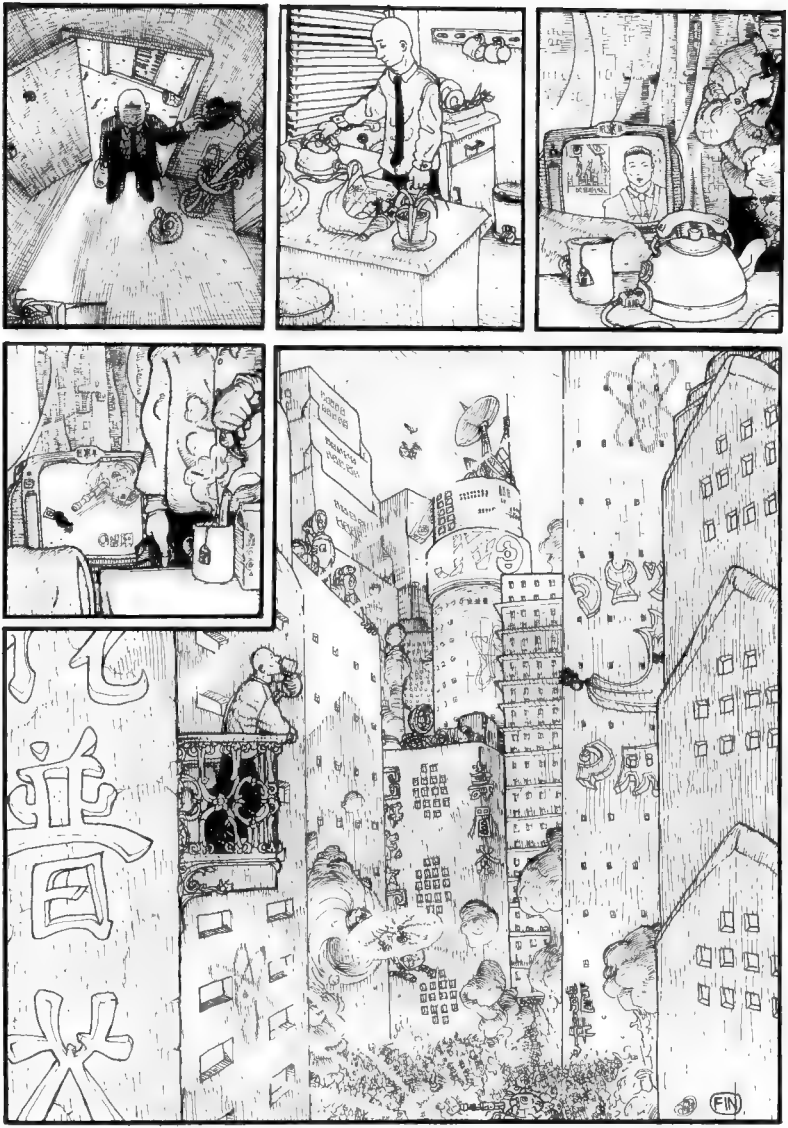











FIN

JUNE 10, 1996.
CENTRAL PARK.
POLICE! MURDER! A WOMAN. SHE'S DEAD!
FREEZE! STAY EXACTLY WHERE YOU ARE
the Goat Man of Central Park

JUNE 11, 1996 AT THE APARTMENT OF KATJA ZAKOV, AMERICA'S GREATEST MEDIUM.
...AND IN THE NEW YORK TIMES IT SAYS:
"THE GOATMAN STRIKES AGAIN! LAST NIGHT TWO JOGGERS FOUND THE CORPSE OF MARSHA DENZLER ON A BRIDGE IN CENTRAL PARK."
HEY...WAIT, IT GETS EVEN BETTER. "A THIRD WITNESS TESTIFIED HAVING SEEN AN ANIMAL-LIKE CREATURE, HALF-HUMAN, HALF-GOAT, RUSH THROUGH THE BUSHES."
IT GETS EVEN MORE INTERESTING, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
"THE POLICE CONNECT THE CASE TO A SERIES OF SIMILAR MURDERS AROUND CENTRAL PARK. SO FAR THEY DON'T HAVE ANY SUSPECTS, THOUGH.
IT CLOSES WITH: "THE GOATMAN, GRUESOME REALITY..."
WOW...GREAT LIGHTNING!
...OR SIMPLY SUPERSTITION."
WHAT WAS THE NAME AGAIN?
THE LATEST VICTIM?
KATJA, I DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS A CASE FOR YOU.
WHAT IF YOUR GOATMAN TURNS OUT TO BE ONE OF THOSE PSYCHOPATHIC MASS-MURDERERS...
STOP WORRYING, JULES.
SOUNDS MORE LIKE A ROBBERY.
COULD IT BE CULT-RELATED?
KAOS MOON
© DAVID BOLLER

STREET.
THIS MUST HAVE BEEN MARSHA DENZLER'S APARTMENT HOUSE.
EXCEPT THE DIVORCE FROM HER HUSBAND LUCAS, SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING MAJOR IN HER LIFE.
A CRUEL DEMISE FOR SUCH A SEDATE LIFE.
THIRD FLOOR, FIRST DOOR TO THE RIGHT.
I'M SORRY, LADY. NO TRESPASSING FOR UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL.
OH, HOW CLUMSY...I DROPPED MY LIPSTICK.
WAIT, MA'AM...I...
SWEET DREAMS, SONNY BOY...
LUCAS WAS A HIGHLY RESPECTED PHILOLOGIST AT BROOKLYN COLLEGE UNTIL HE WAS FIRED RECENTLY.
A DEDICATED MYTHOLOGY BOOK.
I'M GETTING VISUALS FROM TOUCHING THE PAGES TALKING ABOUT BACCHUS.
SPECIAL INTEREST: GREEK MYTHOLOGY!
GUSTAV SCHWAB
GREEK
THIS PAGE IS MARKED.

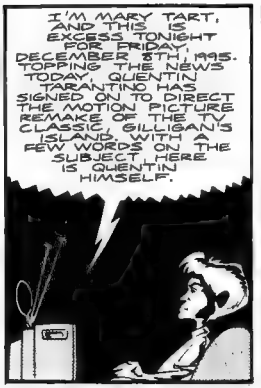
WHEN MARSHA GOT HOME FROM WORK SHE FOUND...
...LUCAS IN BED WITH A STUDENT.
THE COURT LEGALLY DIVORCED THEM AND ...
LUCAS WAS IN LOVE AND WANTED A DIVORCE. MARSHA WAS HURT AND WANTED MONEY.
...LUCAS WAS SENTENCED TO MAKE PAYMENTS THAT WERE FAR BEYOND HIS FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES.
WITH THE MONEY WENT THE GIRL-FRIEND...
SOON ENOUGH HE WAS COMPLETELY OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE REAL WORLD.
...AND ARRIVED A NEW FRIEND, ALCOHOL.
BACCHUS PROMISED TO MAKE HIM ONE OF HIS.
IN RETURN LUCAS WOULD BE OBLIGED TO OFFER HIM SACRIFICES.
THAT WAS FINE WITH HIM ANYWAY, HE THOUGHT CURSING...
...HIS EX-WIFE, HIS EX-BOSS HIS EX-GIRLFRIEND...
...AND STATE AND CHURCH IN GENERAL.

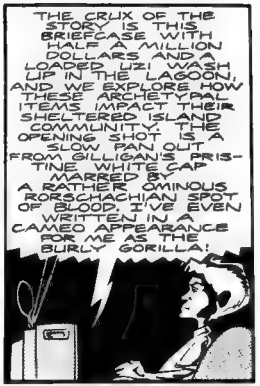
I SUPPOSE I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT...
...UNTIL THE GOATMAN WILL HAVE TO OFFER BACCHUS A NEW SACRIFICE.
OH, NO! PLEASE NOT!
DON'T LOOK DOWN!
FOR BACCHUS!
NO, I WANT MY MOMMY!
I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM.
THERE'S ONLY ONE SOLUTION..
HE'S GOT THE CHILDREN!
I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING FAST OR THIS LUNATIC WILL KILL THOSE KIDS!
GREGORY! THE MONSTER HAS MY SON!

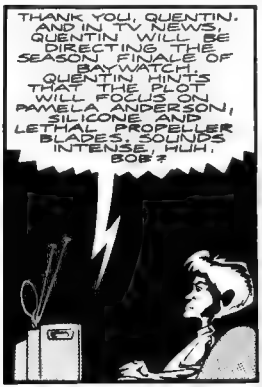
FOR BACCHUS!
NOOOO...
IT'S GRAB-BING US!
GREGORY, THANK GOD.
S.W.A.T.
WHAT IS IT?
FIRE!
...IT'S TIME FOR KAOS MOON.
KATJA, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M OKAY. MY HEAD HURTS A LITTLE.
TOO BAD THAT I COULDN'T STOP THE S.W.A.T. TEAM FROM KILLING LUCAS DENZLER, ALIAS THE GOATMAN.
WHAT? MARSHA'S EX-HUSBAND IS THE GOATMAN?
I HOPE ONE SACRIFICE IS ENOUGH FOR BACCHUS TONIGHT.
WHAT?
NOTHING. HEY, IT STOPPED RAINING.
DAVID BOLLER 1995 ©

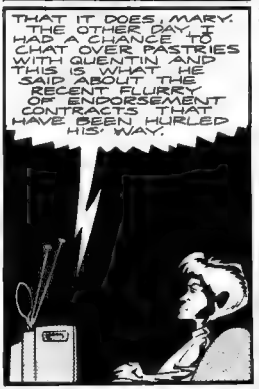
QUENTIN WHO ?

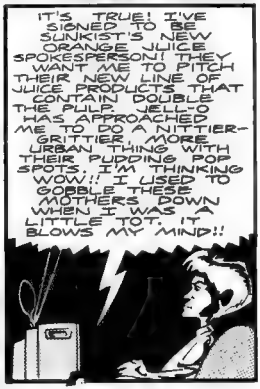
BY BRIAN CLOPPER

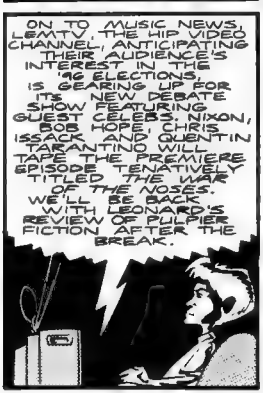

I'M MARY TART, AND THIS IS EXCESS TONIGHT FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8TH, 1995. TOPPING THE NEWS TODAY, QUENTIN TARANTINO HAS SIGNED ON TO DIRECT THE MOTION PICTURE REMAKE OF THE CLASSIC GILLIGAN'S ISLAND WITH A FEW WORDS ON THE SUBJECT HERE IS QUENTIN HIMSELF.

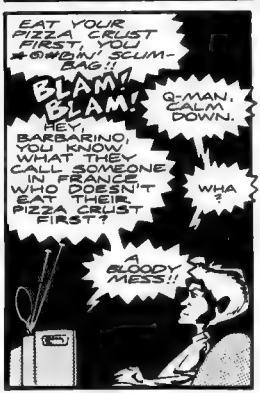

THE CRUX OF THE STORY IS THIS BRIEFCASE WITH FIVE MILLION DOLLARS AND A LOADED UZI WASH UP IN THE LAGOON, AND WE EXPLORE HOW THESE ARCHETYPAL ITEMS IMPACT THEIR SHELTERED ISLAND COMMUNITY. THE OPENING SHOT IS A SLOW PAN OUT FROM GILLIGAN'S PRISTINE WHITE CAP MARRED BY A RATHER OMINOUS RORSCHACHIAN SPOT OF BLOOD. I'VE EVEN WRITTEN IN A CAMEO APPEARANCE FOR ME AS THE BURLY GORILLA!


THANK YOU, QUENTIN. AND IN TV NEWS, QUENTIN WILL BE DIRECTING THE SEASON FINALE OF BAYWATCH. QUENTIN HINTS THAT THE PLOT WILL FOCUS ON PAMELA ANDERSON, SILICONE AND LETHAL PROPELLER BLADES. SOUNDS INTENSE, HUH, BOB?


THAT IT DOES, MARY. THE OTHER DAY I HAD A CHANCE TO CHAT OVER PASTRIES WITH QUENTIN AND THIS IS WHAT HE SAID ABOUT THE RECENT FLURRY OF ENDORSEMENT CONTRACTS THAT HAVE BEEN HURLED HIS WAY.


IT'S TRUE! I'VE SIGNED TO BE SUNKIST'S NEW ORANGE JUICE SPOKESPERSON! THEY WANT ME TO PITCH THEIR NEW LINE OF JUICE PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN DOUBLE THE PULP! JELL-O HAS APPROACHED ME TO DO A NITTIER-GRITTIER, MORE URBAN THING WITH THEIR PUDDING POP SPOTS. I'M THINKING WOW!! I USED TO GOBBLE THESE MOTHERS DOWN WHEN I WAS A LITTLE TOT! IT BLOWS MY MIND!!


ON TO MUSIC NEWS, LEMTV, THE HIP VIDEO CHANNEL, ANTICIPATING THEIR AUDIENCE'S INTEREST IN THE '96 ELECTIONS, IS GEARING UP FOR ITS NEW DEBATE SHOW FEATURING GUEST CELEBS, NIXON, BOB HOPE, CHRIS ISSACK AND QUENTIN TARANTINO. WILL TAPE THE PREMIERE EPISODE TENATIVELY TITLED THE WAR OF THE ROSES. WE'LL BE BACK WITH LEONARD'S REVIEW OF PULPIER FICTION AFTER THE BREAK.


EAT YOUR PIZZA CRUST FIRST, YOU ★@#&%! SCUM-BAG!!
BLAM! BLAM!
Q-MAN, CALM DOWN.
HEY, BARBARINO, YOU'LL KNOW WHAT THEY CALL SOMEONE IN FRANCE WHO DOESN'T EAT THEIR PIZZA CRUST FIRST?
WHA ?
A BLOODY MESS!!

NEXT:
PROFESSOR MEAD EXPLORES

THE TARANTINO CLONE THEORY!

POOR GEORGE

HEY, JUNE. I HEAR DISCO'S MAKING A COMEBACK.
YEAH, BUT NOT ONLY THAT. PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS ARE SWEEPING THE U.S. AS WELL.

HEY!! IS YOUR MOM MAKING STOVETOP?

IT'S AMAZING WHAT A LITTLE CRAN CAN DO.

VELVET
CRUD
BLYOP!
JEEZ!

WHAT THE HELL HAS COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING COME TO?

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THOSE OLDER SPAM COMMERCIALS?

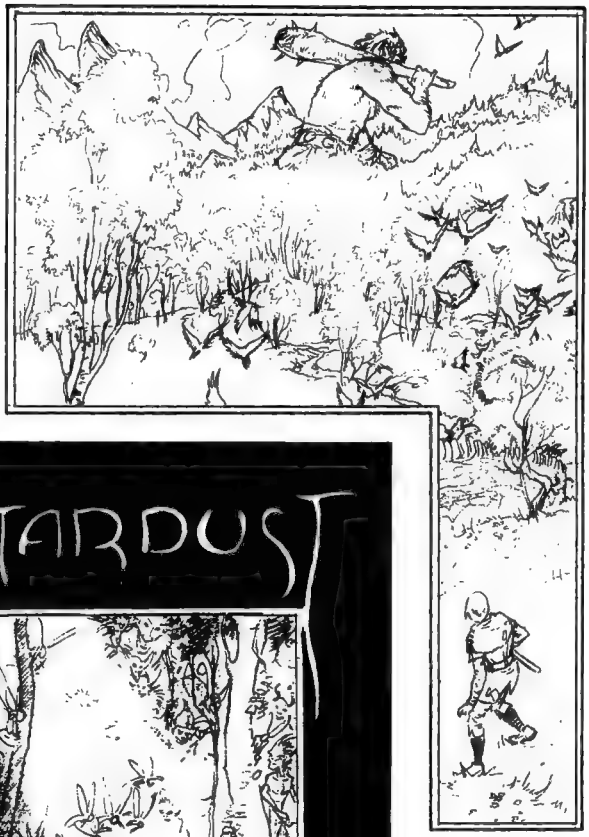
THE FAMILY USED TO SIT AROUND AND ENJOY A NICE HOME COOKED MEAL OF SPAM.

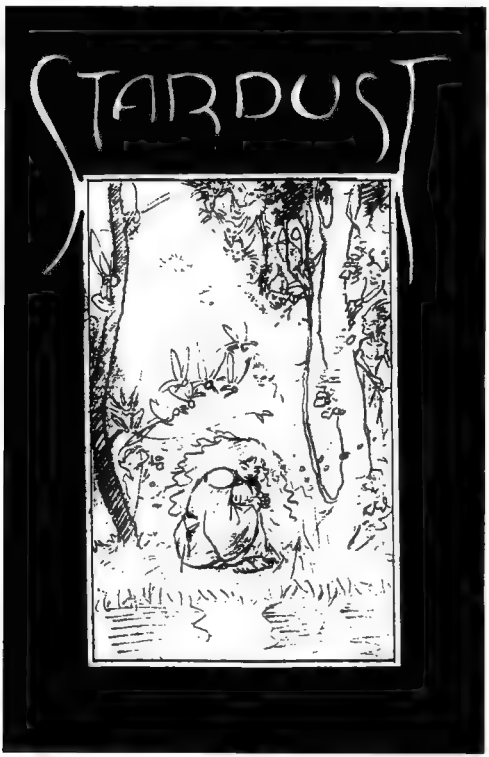
BUT YOU'LL NOTICE ONE THING.
NOT ONCE!
NOT ONCE!
DID THEY EVER GIVE A DAMN ABOUT WHAT KIND OF STUFFING THEY WERE HAVING.

Charles Vess Sketchbook

OF STARDUST™

STARDUST and all artwork is ™and© Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess.




STARDUST

PAINTWORK

YOU'RE SURE THIS'LL MATCH THE REST OF IT?
YEAH...YEAH, I THINK SO— STILL, IF IT DOESN'T, IT'S THEIR FAULT FOR RUSHING US.
WEIRD ISN'T IT?
HUH?
THEM. BEING SO UPTIGHT— I MEAN, SURE, WE'RE MAKING FIRST CONTACT WITH THE CENTAURIANS, BUT WHY ALL THE GRIEF... OVER SOME CHIPPED PAINTWORK?
OKAY, THAT'S IT. WE'RE DONE. LET'S LOAD UP, AND GET INSIDE.
IT'S FUNNY... I CAN'T QUITE PUT MY FINGER ON IT,...
...BUT I'VE BEEN WONDERING...
ABOUT WHAT?
ALL THOSE SPEECHES ABOUT WHAT THIS MISSION STANDS FOR...YOU KNOW--"EXPANDING THE FRONTIERS OF THE KNOWN"... "THE HANDSHAKE ACROSS THE STARS"...
YEAH?
ALL THAT STUFF...
WHAT ABOUT IT?
...DO YOU THINK THAT'S THE WHOLE STORY?
THIS VESSEL IS SPONSORED BY THE
Coca-Cola
Trade-mark®
COMPANY
LIKE I SAID, I CAN'T EXACTLY PINPOINT ANYTHING, BUT, WELL....
END

STORY AND ART BY PATRICK WOODROW

To get to the
OTHER SIDE
by Graeme Nell Reid
©1995

MY MOTHER LIKES TO REMIND ME THAT AT MY AGE MY FATHER WAS MARRIED AND EXPECTING HIS FIRST SON.
THIS FROM A WOMAN WHO PACKS A LUNCH FOR THE DOG.
SHE DESPERATELY WANTS GRANDCHILDREN.
I DON'T KNOW.
I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS A FATHER.
BUT I TOY WITH THE NOTION EVERYTIME SHE MENTIONS IT
AND I LOOK AT MY CAT BAILEY AND PLAYFULLY CALL HIM SON
EVERYTIME I LOOK AT HIM LIKE THAT, I CAN'T HELP BUT SEE MAC LURKING BEHIND THOSE EYES

written by MATTHEW SMITH • illustrated by BRIAN HORTON

I DON'T THINK I'VE FELT AS STRONGLY ABOUT ANYTHING SINCE MAC DIED
NOT SO PURELY.
MAC WAS MY FAMILY'S CAT SINCE BEFORE I WAS BORN.
A REGAL SIAMESE.
MY CONSTANT PLAY COMPANION
MY FRIEND.
BY THE TIME I GREW UP, MAC HAD GROWN OLD.
I HAD TO CARRY HIM UP THE STAIRS EVERY NIGHT BECAUSE HE COULDN'T DO IT HIMSELF.
AND EVERY NIGHT I WOULD LAY HIM NEXT TO ME IN MY BED AND SQUEEZE HIM WITH A SIMPLE AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE THAT I WISH I COULD STILL FEEL.
I DON'T KNOW WHY THESE THOUGHTS COME TO ME NOW
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT I HOPE TO FEEL IF I EVER GET A CHANCE TO HOLD A CHILD OF MY OWN
PERHAPS.
IT WOULD BE A BEAUTIFUL FEELING..
BUT MAYBE IT'S JUST BECAUSE I MISS HIM TERRIBLY
END

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NEGATIVE BURN #29:

Well, you definitely can't go wrong by having a Zander Cannon cover and lead-off story and considering that Zander's one of the hottest new creators of 1995, I imagine that his fans will be looking for this issue in a few years. This is an interesting concept. I never realized that Cannon was basing his series of "Knute's Escapes" on short stories submitted to him, and I've enjoyed **REPLACEMENT GOD** enough to try to devise one to send to him. Well, after seeing how complex this escape was, I realized that I might not be up for the task! This escape attempt was as funny as the actual comic, and I was chortling at Cannon's subtle sense of humor at every turn. Like the comic, it often took me a few readings to understand what was going on, though, and the fact that I had to study all the technical diagrams didn't help the flow of the story; maybe this was just a bit *too* complex. Still, I hope to see more of these in the future, as they are one of the many charms of Cannon's character, Knute.

Surprisingly, "At Last the Truth" was the funniest strip in the "Mr. Mamoulian" series so far, and to be honest, I wouldn't be too shocked if this actually was authored by some guy from "Squiperi"! Now, this is the sort of twist that this series has needed to reinvigorate the humor element, and I preferred this to another chapter in the story of that pathetic loser, Mr. Mamoulian.

Speaking of **INSTANT PIANO** (and I was earlier, in my letter for NB #28), here is a story drawn by Mark Badger, not exactly my favorite member of that comedy troupe. I was surprised how much I enjoyed "Chimera"; it was a very effective piece and I could easily seeing this as a recurring feature. The only reason I'd not want to see too much of it is that it seems to use some of the similar themes and "Twilight Zone" endings as your own **KILROY** as well as James' **APPARITION**, and there are already too many of these types of stories in **NEGATIVE BURN**. Badger's artwork looks about the same as it always does. (And I'll just leave it at that.)

Ah. A short piece written and illustrated by our own Ken Meyer, Jr. is up next. "Pre-Road Dream" seemed like the sort of strip that Rick Veitch puts in the back of his comic, **RARE BIT FIENDS**, and so I'm going to take a wild guess that this was originally intended for that forum. Dream comics are usually kind of fun in small doses, but they're exceedingly frustrating to me since I can never remember my own dreams. After reading this one, I think that maybe Ken should change his diet to prevent this sort of thing. (Inside joke: Or stop seeing such strange movies...) The artwork was okay, but Ken obviously didn't put as much time into this as some of his other work.

Oh, boy! Next up is a longer piece from the "Two Pauls" (Or rather "The Comic Stylings of Erickson and Fricke")! This one was absolutely hilarious, and I'm sure that everyone who's lived alone has experienced this at least once in their life! I don't think I've ever gotten as obsessive about hearing my neighbors "doing it" as this fellow does though (What can I say? My neighbors are rather quiet and prudish.) The long lead-up and the final punchline were very well executed, and I'm anxiously awaiting their next endeavor to see if they can keep up this sort of level of humor. Now, *this* is humorous comics at their finest. (Once again, the comparisons to the Instant Pianists are inevitable, because they have the same sort of real-life humor.)

Oooo...just when I was going to give that last one the coveted best story of the issue prize, along comes another wonderful piece by Bernie Mireault, whose outlook on life closely mirrors my own. I really enjoy how he takes such mundane things that we hardly ever think about and turn them into wonderful bases for his stories. "Of the Spheres" is an amazingly deep piece, and like most of Bernie's other work, it really left me thinking even though it might have been intended as a bit of a throwaway. The way that Bernie brings life to the planets and to the ecological problems of the Earth was just wonderful. (Looks like another one for the next collection...)

After that, the "Terry Moore Sketchbook" has very little profound effect on me. Looks nice but doesn't tell me anything I didn't know.

What are you trying to do, Joe, kill me? After the last two "classics", you include a Phil Hester story just to see if my loyalties are stable? Well, as you know, I loved the last "Creep" story and I'd buy any book that has Phil Hester involved in it! (I can't wait to meet Phil in...um...Philly in a few weeks!) "The Slide to Nowhere" was a wordless wonder, putting the full spotlight on his wonderful artwork, but in the end, I liked the last "Creep" short story a bit better. I really loved the layouts, though, and as in "Boneshaker", Phil uses the medium in a most unique way.

And now all the pressure is on our man, Nat Gertler, to follow-up all these other great strips with his first installment of "The Factor". Well, I could tell right off the bat that I didn't like the artwork in this one; it was trying too hard to attain realism but the art just ended up looking kind of forced and the layouts were a bit stiff. The former problem could probably have been the way that it was inked. So, now there's even more pressure on Nat to make the story interesting with the words alone. Well, what can I say? This was great. Nat took a fairly simple concept of a bank robbery foiled by a costumed hero and put an interesting twist to it so that no one could actually describe the individual. The dialogue was absolutely perfect, adding to the realism of the story, and I enjoyed seeing this story told from the news director's angle. There is a lot of mystery surrounding the character and where this story will go, but overall, this was a great set-up and I look forward to the next chapter. (Nice job, Nat!)

Unlike some of the one-pagers that are used to fill up space, "Dear Judy Garland" by Andy Bennett was a great wrap-up to one of the best and most consistent issues of NB *ever*! That's right! This was my all-time favorite issue of **NEGATIVE BURN**, with the weakest piece being the dream comic and "Chimera". (But even those were pretty darn good!)

If I'd have to choose a favorite story this issue, it would probably be between "Of the Spheres" and "Paul Pry and the Plastic Cup" because of their simple and immediate nature, but then "The Factor" and "Replacement God" were also wonderful reads with a lot of depth. (Also, I loved the **CAVEWOMAN** ad on the back!)

Overall, #28 & #29 were two of the better issues of NB, although I'm not sure if the added pages are as noticeable as one would think. I like seeing the longer stories rather than some of the shorter poetry pieces that used to fill up the extra space in past issues, though, and I wouldn't even mind seeing one or two longer stories in the future. All said, 8 pages is a good length to dedicate to a story, but maybe we could see a few more continued or serialized stories in the future. ("The Factor" is a good start.) At least it would help to keep bringing people back from issue to issue! Anyway, I have no problem paying a dollar extra for **NEGATIVE BURN** as it is now.

I do find it surprisingly funny how **DARK HORSE PRESENTS**, one of the longest running comics anthologies, has actually been taking cues from **NEGATIVE BURN** as far as their recent content. For some reason, it just doesn't work for them though, because they're relying too much on the continued stories, and when there is one or two that don't interest me, there is little point to buying the title. On the other hand, **NEGATIVE BURN** still seems to be about variety both within individual issues, as well as from issue to issue.

I would like to see a few more "theme" issues, though. I imagine you have a pretty hefty back stock of stories, but it would be interesting to see what some of the creators who are involved with NEG BURN could come up with if given a specific direction. (Maybe this could be a yearly tradition like the Anniversary issues?)

Oh, and if I put another vote in for Greg DiGenti to get his own book, does that count?

Man, Edward, you sure do write loooong reviews, don' t you. But you know what? They're great! Hope you keep them coming! Let's see if I can answer some of your questions.

You'll be happy to hear that Zander Cannon has agreed to bring back his REPLACEMENT GOD on a semi-regular basis (probably about every 4 issues—he'll next appear in #35).

I hope you caught my correction last issue about the "Paul Pry" story. Paul Fricke was completely responsible for the excellent tale. I once again offer my apologies for incorrectly crediting Paul Erickson for that particular story.

More Greg DiGenti coming up. I promise.

Mike Leonard
MLeon99@aol.com

NEGATIVE BURN #30:

"The Ritual": Didn't like it. Too 'plain' and predictable, in my opinion. Would have worked better if it were four pages instead on nine.

"The Factor": Part Two was even better than the original. The contrasting, 'idealized' art style for the dream sequences was a great concept, and the story was really eye-catching, looking at views of a victim who has been saved by a superhero. MORE! MORE!

"Rob Haines": Again, I've heard quite a bit about this title and Randy Reynaldo, but this is my first exposure to him. Loved it! Rob's nice, simple and clean, yet uncompromising style is a very welcome change from all the cross-hatching and ultra-detail work that abounds today. Great writing, too. Looks like I'll have to check out **ADVENTURE STRIP DIGEST**, too. (Food? Who needs to eat?)

"Acid Lad": Okay, maybe I'm biased—I like Mike Oeming's work, and I think he's a great guy. I've already seen pages from his upcoming **SHIP OF FOOLS** Caliber title, and I can't wait.

"Budd's Basement": Again, I like silent stories, and this is my first exposure to Budd's work, other than the various promo pieces I've seen from **CAVEWOMAN**. If this is any indication, **CAVEWOMAN** will be one red-hot book.

"The Bungy Cord": More Zander Cannon, please! This stuff is wonderful!

"Targets": A bit overly dramatic, but the moral is sound. Liked Rob Davis' art.

"No Regrets": I can remember seeing Jeff's work on **ULTRA KLUTZ** years ago, and I like his 'surrealistic realism'. Glad there's a Part Two—I'd like to see one or two continued serial features in each issue of NB, if you can keep doing stuff like this and "The Factor."

"Old Saint Nick": Sick, but I liked it. I've always liked parodies of Christmas—I got suspended in high school for doing an x-rated series of parodies of the 'Night Before Christmas' (Oh, how I have suffered for my art!)

"Whatever Happened to Doc Donovan": A very cool Indiana Jones / Doc Savage homage

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LETTERS

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piece. Only one complaint—the layout of the book, putting the 'kicker' page, the final page on a two page spread, kind of killed the suspense. I would have found this story much cooler if I would have had to turn the page to see the Doc's final fate, but the suspense and mystery were killed by having it right there, next to the climax page of the story.

"Tales of the Hoon": Cool. I saw this stuff in **SHI** a while back. I like Robb's art style and sense of humor.

"Boys Will Be Boys": My favorite this issue! This was sick and perverse—in a fun 'Ren & Stimpy' sort of way. Great job to Derek Drymon!

Well, that's about it for now. Talk to you again soon.

Hope you checked out Budd Root's CAVEWOMAN, Mike. I think we have a hit on our hands!

Also, since you liked both Robb Bihun's and Derek Drymon's shorts so much you should check out your local comic shop for an issue or seven of their hilarious FUNNYTIME FEATURES and Robb's THE HOON. They're both worth the effort of tracking down. If you can't find them then order them from the guys themselves. An ad followed their stories in NB #30 that has all the ordering info you may need. Tell them Joe sent you.

Olav Beemer
Zeist
The Netherlands

Dear Joe,

Well, well, **NEGATIVE BURN #30** certainly was a fine and entertaining issue, with more than its fair share of extremely good and sometimes even thought-provoking stories. I'll dive into my opinions on those features of this issue I feel are worth commenting on.

The "Rob Hanes" adventure was funny, perhaps even more light-hearted than Randy Reynaldo's usual material, but with a mere four pages, he nevertheless worked out a short tale wonderfully well. Of course, with an art style as smooth and open as his, you just got to love his always eye-catching work. I, for one, wouldn't mind seeing more of Randy's work in these pages.

"Budd's Basement" started out on a rather strange note, but as soon as I saw what writer/illustrator Budd Root was doing here—with him bringing in every genre of the comic book and movie medium—I started to truly enjoy this little tale. Add to that the fact that I found the artwork to be delightful, crisp and very well suited to the light-hearted atmosphere of the story, and you have reason enough to come to the same conclusion as I did: this one was fun.

"Targets" was a sudden change of pace. Apart from the good pacing, the fine art and the nice action scenes, I felt the deeper message was one worth conveying upon the readers, though. Comics will always remain a part of society, no matter how bad politics wants to get rid of them forever. All in all, a very topical story, with the references to Neil, Frank, Dave and Harlan being another nice subtle touch.

"Whatever Happened to Doc Donovan?" turned out to be an interesting story, but somehow, I put off reading it until I had finished with the rest of this issue's features. The art didn't look inviting, the miasma of captions were even less encouraging. However, once I read it, the tables were turned, for between the interesting theme and the shocker ending, this truly was a nice and decent tale. My hat's off to Noel Hannan and Virgil Elvin.

Finally, "A Thousand Pictures and One Word" served as a humorous conclusion to the issue. It's a sad and tragic look at the state of the industry of not too many months ago. Fortunately, more and more these days, the small independent books make it to the comic book stores. Even so, this installment had me laughing out loud at several instances, so thumbs up.

All things considered, this was a truly fine and superb production. The upswing is moving as fast and strong as ever and the end is nowhere in sight yet. Damn, if these **NEGATIVE BURN** issues continue to increase in their level of quality and entertainment value, I'll be running out of superlatives pretty soon!

It seems like most everyone has pointed out Randy Reynaldo's ROB HAINES for praise. I take it you'd like to see more of Randy in these pages? I'll see what I can do. In the meantime, check out his ADVENTURE STRIP DIGEST series which he self-publishes through his WCG Comics imprint. I believe the fourth issue shoud be out now. Also don't forget you can get them straight from the source. Check out the ad in NB #30 for ordering info.

Gelb Boon
via American On Line

Re: **NEGATIVE BURN #30**. Overall Performance: 90

There's a lot of good new talent in this one.

"The Ritual": A nice piece that is open to many different interpretations. I like a story that's different for every reader. If you stay on the surface level, there's not too much here, but I hardly ever read things at surface level. (Maybe superhero books by the (ex)big two...)

"Mr. Mamoulian": 'Nuff said.

"The Factor": Coming along nicely. Janine Johnston's art looks good.

"La Promessa": It's good to see P. Craig Russell in NB. It's also a good lead in to something I was thinking about when I found my collection of **EPIC ILLUSTRATED** in my closet. While I was looking at it I was thinking how similar the work in EPIC is to the work in **NEGATIVE BURN**, which could arguably be called EPIC's successor. If you have any old issues of **EPIC** around, take a look, it's an interesting idea. Looking through the **EPIC** issues, one reason for their downfall may have been the inbreeding, the drawing from the same artistic gene pool for each issue. That's where NB has the edge.

"Rob Haines": I've heard about this book for awhile and I'm

glad to get the chance to read a story. I was impressed with the quality of the work, but it's not my type of reading.

"Acid Lad": This one gets big thumbs down. This would be appropriate in a 'sketchbook' section but I can't believe it's here as a stand alone. I really enjoyed MAO's illustration in the other story I've seen him do. Things like this bewilder me. I have to give you credit for experimenting though!

"Budd's Basement": An entertaining romp. OK, this is a 'surface readable,' story. As is "The Bungy Cord."

"Targets": Well done, Bravo!

"No Regrets": Very good as well. The first stuff of Jeff's I've read since the 'Ultra Man,' thing. (I don't recall the real name.) Good one.

"Old Saint Nick": Hmmm. Makes me want to finish doing Scott Eckelaert's Christmas story. I can't decide if this one is bible-thumper propoganda or Christmas hating propoganda. I'm ready to write it off either way.

"Whatever Happened to Doc Donovan": A decent if over-written Twilight Zonish tale. It was good for a light (long) read.

"The Hoon": If you can't tell, unless comedy is scathingly biting (yes, Clowes and Bagge...), it's really not my forte. So I guess both "The Hoon" and "Boys will be Boys," are good for what they are. The artwork is fun and entertaining in each.

On the other hand, "A Thousand Pictures Plus One Word," was a scathingly funny piece! I somehow missed reading it until I got to this point in this letter. Hah! Too bad for this particular RETAILER MAN!

Well, that covers it. Talk to you soon. I'm looking forward to next issue!

Interesting point about EPIC ILLUSTRATED and NEGATIVE BURN, Gelb. I admit to having been an EPIC reader for a couple of years there and enjoyed, for the most part, what they were trying to do. It was there that I first discovered a number of talented creators that I've been enjoying for years now (Rick Veitch, Jon J. Muth, etc.), as well as a number of old-time favorites doing new, exciting work (P. Craig Russell, Barry Windsor-Smith, even Dave Sim). But if I had to mention a magazine that was probably more of an influence on my vision of NB it would have to be ECLIPSE MAGAZINE. They had a much more "wide-open" attitude about their contents, wherein EPIC was mainly science-fiction/fantasy.

R. J. Pentzell
Hillsdale, MI

Dear Mr. Pruett,

As you of course know, the number of anthologies comics currently making their way to the stores has become dishearteningly small. (I know of only four now getting anything like national distribution—**NEGATIVE BURN, ZERO ZERO, DESERT PEACH,** and **DARK HORSE PRESENTS**; but maybe others are out there, too.)

You seem to be the only editor left who understands "anthology" to mean: publishing work chosen strictly for its quality and potential appeal to grown-up readers, not picked according to some trendy theory about what subjects and styles "ought" to be in comics or about what the next "new wave" should be. As a result, **NEGATIVE BURN** doesn't get filled with successive waves of (e.g.) boring "autobiography," or plotless, neo-Dada graffiti, or sophomoric, "post-Punk" ventures in shock or disgust. I don't mean to suggest that these directions are somehow illegitimate, only that, when anything like them becomes an editorial fixation (even briefly), then acceptance or rejection of material becomes a "statement" first, and only secondarily a judgment of the skill and viewpoint of the individual artist. And that isn't what an anthology ought to do.

If you like anthologies then you'll be happy to hear that Caliber Comics is in the process of bringing out a new anthology titled NEW WORLDS. It'll be somewhat different than NB, as it deals more with action/adventure-type material and won't be all over the board as NB is, but it'll still be fun. Check it out. It's on sale this month.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR REGARDING SUBMISSIONS: *As of now, I'm officially closing NB to submissions. This isn't permanent, just temporarily. I have more than enough material to carry NB through issue #50. I've also still got a rather large stack of submissions I haven't replied to yet that I'll get to as soon as I can. When I'm ready to re-open NB to submissions I'll let you know by posting it here. Thanks for your patience and understanding.*

Joe Pruett
Editor

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